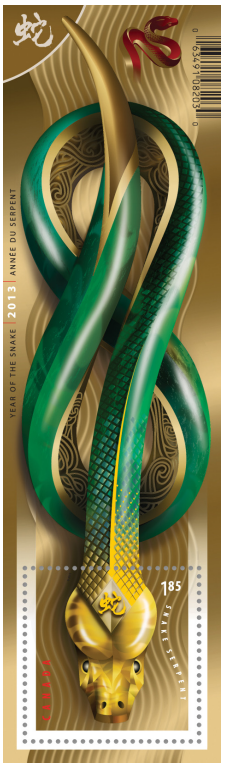
Canada Celebrates Year of the Snake



On January 8 Canada Post marked the Year of the Snake with an assortment of stamps and other philatelic souvenirs. The Year of the Snake runs from February 10, 2013 to January 30, 2014.

Canada Post's description of people born in the Year of the Snake isn't totally flattering: "…in the Asian countries that celebrate the Lunar New Year, the Snake is viewed as the wisest and most enigmatic of all the zodiac creatures. In fact, it's such a strong sign of intelligence and luck that an ancient Chinese saying notes that finding a snake in one's home is great fortune and ensures that the inhabitants will never go hungry.

"The sixth of 12 creatures in the zodiac, the Snake represents intelligence, materialism and gracefulness. Those born in the Year of the Snake are analytical and tend to look closely before they leap. They love luxury and know how to get what they want. Even if it means scheming and plotting, clever and cunning snakes know that the end justifies whatever means necessary. Still, the Snake requires peace; noise and stress are not well tolerated. The hard-working and ambitious Snake is successful in professional life, but tends to hop jobs, becoming easily bored if not sufficiently challenged or rewarded."

For its Year of the Snake stamps Canada Post features a water snake. As in past issues in this series, the text on the stamps and related products is in Chinese, English and French. "This is a very popular stamp series, and with good reason," said Steven Fletcher, Minister of State (Transport). "It's a wonderful way to honor our diversity and to celebrate the beginning of a new year."

Speaking for Canada Post, Mary Traversy, Senior Vice-president, Mail, at Canada Post, stated "Once again, Canada Post honors the Chinese Lunar New Year with a richly designed stamp issue that captures the spirit of the Water Snake. This stunning issue continues to raise the bar in stamp design…."

The red snake on the domestic "Permanent" domestic issue—Canada's version of our "Forever" non-denominated stamps—is featured in a curving position to emulate it gliding upon water. On the international issue, a yellow and jade green snake is gracefully coiled in a figure eight, the luckiest number in Chinese culture. Strong colors were employed to echo the luxury that the snake treasures. The design team spent months consulting experts in the Chinese community in order to create this issue.

Technically, the design team was allowed to use two finishes, gold foil and embossing. In addition to the right lighting and the right shadows in the flat image, these finishes were used to create a three dimensional effect of the snake slithering through the water. Incorporating the water element graphically, through the circles and waves—and then selecting areas of the snake for foiling enhanced the 3D effect. Stamp Design Manager Alain Leduc, "We hope that we have met the challenge of continuing to surprise the collector and the mailer with this annual issue. This design, combined with the multi-level embossing technique, has achieved the best three-dimensional effect possible on stamp paper. The illusion of the snake floating on the water is, I think, stunning."

Canada Post is issuing 5.5 million of the domestic rate stamps inpanes of 25, booklets of six, two different souvenir sheets and uncut press sheets. The International Rate stamp is available only on the souvenir sheets, one of which also includes the Domestic Rate stamp.